

South Carolina's Current Developments

Helping People Help the Land



USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

Winter 2006



From the Office of the
State Conservationist
Walter W. Douglas



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Dear NRCsers,

Now that we have closed the book on a highly successful FY 2006, we can look ahead to an exciting and challenging 2007. We are currently operating under a continuing resolution, so I encourage you to monitor the budget situation carefully and be prudent in your spending.

On a national scope, NRCS and its partners made 2006 a banner year for "Helping People Help the Land," reducing soil erosion by more than 75 million tons; creating, restoring, or enhancing 318,000 acres of wetlands; and planning conservation systems and practices that cover more than 50 million acres—a 60 percent increase over 2001.

The South Carolina Conservation Partnership is no exception when it comes to conservation successes. Farmers and landowners throughout the Palmetto State took advantage of the conservation assistance available to them. They eagerly participated in Farm Bill programs and as a result, NRCS provided these landowners with over 17 million dollars to protect soil and water resources.

As your State Conservationist, I am so proud of our achievements. I know, without a doubt, that our workforce is wholeheartedly dedicated to conserving the natural resources that make our state such a beautiful place to live. Thanks for another great year and best wishes to you and your family in 2007.

Cover photo: Anne Springs Close Greenway in Fort Mill,
by Amy O. Maxwell, Public Affairs Specialist

Notes from the Field



Regional and National NRCS Leaders Visit South Carolina

In October, the East Region State Conservationist Meeting was hosted in Charleston, South Carolina. NRCS State Conservationists from the East, along with staff from NRCS National Headquarters, attended the meeting. The group had the opportunity to visit an Earth Team project on Sullivan's Island, and also spent time at two small farms in Orangeburg County.

Sullivan's Island is a barrier island off the coast of South Carolina, near Charleston. It was impacted by Hurricane Hugo in 1989, and since that time, Earth Team volunteers have donated hundreds of hours to stabilize the area with sand fencing and dune plants. NRCS Chief Lancaster, along with Associate Chief Dana York, USDA Under Secretary Merlyn Carlson, Regional Assistant Chief Dick Coombe, and the East Region State Conservationists, traveled to the island by bus and enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about coastal South Carolina and the conservation issues that are unique to a barrier island. The tour was hosted by Earth Team Volunteer Bill Wilkes who gave the group an informative and lively overview of the project.

On the final day of the South Carolina visit, Chief Lancaster, along with Coombe and York, traveled to Orangeburg County for a small farm tour highlighting conservation practices at the farms of Ty Pritcher and Stephen Jeremiah. "We wanted to highlight the importance of conservation on small farms for the Chief and his staff, and we chose Orangeburg County because of the outstanding conservation ethic of the producers and landowners in this part of the state," said Douglas.

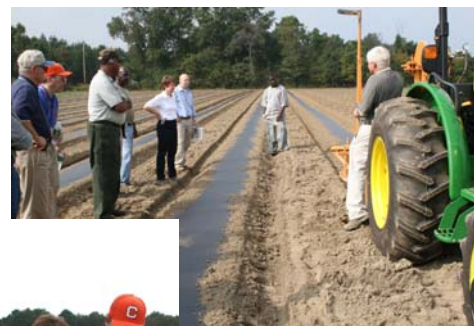
Pritcher is a small farmer in Holy Hill with nearly 50 acres of cattle and truck crops. His operation was improved with fencing, water troughs, and pasture and hayland management practices. Stephen Jeremiah farms 140 acres in

Vance and is aiming to improve his truck crop operation with irrigation water management. Pritcher has already received financial and technical assistance through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Orangeburg NRCS District Conservationist Frank Stephens and Soil Conservationist Charles Holland coordinated the tour, along with NRCS Small Farmer Liaison Wilfred Pace and RC&D Coordinator Roy Todd. "We are proud of the farming successes we have here in Orangeburg County, and Mr. Jeremiah and Mr. Pritcher are excellent stewards of the land," said Stephens.



left to right: Earth Team Volunteer Bill Wilkes, USDA Under Secretary Merlyn Carlson, SC NRCS State Conservationist Walt Douglas, and NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster visited Sullivan's Island to learn more about coastal South Carolina and the conservation issues that are unique to a barrier island.



pictured above: RC&D Coordinator Roy Todd answered questions about small farming in Orangeburg County.



pictured at left: NRCS Chief Lancaster, Associate Chief Dana York, and District Conservationist Frank Stephens review a small farm conservation plan.

EQIP Protects Water Quality and Improves Wildlife Habitat in Colleton County

Amy O. Maxwell, USDA-NRCS State Public Affairs Specialist

South Carolina's Sweatman Farms is a 2,000-acre row crop and cotton operation (spanning both Colleton and Dorchester Counties). Farmed full-time by Jeff Sweatman, along with his son Justin, the farm is an outstanding example of the benefits of conservation. Sweatman's great-grandfather farmed this land, and while the present generation of Sweatman's may have inherited the farm, what's more important is that they also inherited a strong conservation ethic. The Sweatman's believe that it is important to conserve soil and water resources. "I love farming and working the land. I also know that I need to do my

"I love farming and working the land. I also know that I need to do my part to take care of the resources that have supported my family."

-SC Farmer Jeff Sweatman

part to take care of the resources that have supported my family," explained Sweatman.

Through the USDA NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP),

Sweatman enrolled nearly 500 acres of his land to protect water quality. The installation of field borders and filter strips helps protect nearby water sources from harmful runoff of chemicals and excessive nutrients. Ultimately, the benefits of EQIP are helping to protect the nearby Edisto River.

NRCS District Conservationist Fred Tritapoe said, "There are many benefits to the conservation practices that have been installed on this acreage, and that also includes improved wildlife habitat." The vegetation in the field borders provides excellent nesting and cover for upland birds.

Sweatman also strip-till's his cotton. He says there is a bit of maintenance necessary to manage the field borders, such as occasional disking, but the environmental benefits are worth it. "With the assistance I received through EQIP,



Conservation practices installed under EQIP at Sweatman Farms protect nearby water sources, such as the Edisto River.

and the guidance of the NRCS conservationists who assisted me, I have been able to improve my operation for both efficiency and soil and water quality enhancement," said Sweatman.

"The field borders don't require much work, and really, they take care of themselves."

Sweatman first enrolled in EQIP in 2003. The program offers producers incentive payments to encourage them to adopt land management practices, such as nutrient management, manure management, integrated pest management, and wildlife habitat management. Since its establishment in the 1996 Farm Bill, EQIP has obligated nearly \$1.08 billion to help producers protect soil and water resources.

Sweatman's conservation ethic, as well as his desire to pass on his love for farming, is what keeps him going. "My son loves the land as much as I do, and I hope that he will continue the family tradition." Sweatman is also proud of the family's recent addition—a new granddaughter. "I hope that she will be able to see the work that our family has done over the years to protect this land, and that she too will gain an appreciation and love for the land."



left to right: NRCS District Conservationist Fred Tritapoe consults with Jeff Sweatman, an EQIP participant who enrolled nearly 500 acres in the program to protect water quality.

Farm Fair Day in Dorchester County

Sabrenna Bryant, NRCS Public Affairs Assistant

On a breezy Autumn day, in an open field painted gold, red and orange with fall foliage, the Dorchester County Conservation Partnership held the 1st Annual *Farm Fair Day*. NRCS, Dorchester Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Farm Bureau, and Clemson Extension worked together to create this fun-filled day for kindergarten through third grade students.

Four schools, totaling nearly 300 school-children, took advantage of the activities offered at the fair, including face painting, a petting zoo, hay rides, a soil tunnel and loads of games, activities and storytelling. "The purpose of this event is to help kids get acquainted with agriculture," said NRCS District Conservationist Jeff Lucas. "At this hands-on fair, they can see many different aspects of farming all in one place."

The Dorchester Conservation Partnership hopes to continue *Farm Fair Day* in the future, and local teachers are more than supportive of their efforts. Melinda Mitchell, a third grade teacher at Williams Memorial Elementary, hopes to bring future students to the event. "We incorporate agriculture in Social Studies and this really helps to reinforce what they have already learned," said Mitchell. "Most of my students have not seen any aspects of farm life and I think this fair provides good experience."



Students learned about conservation on the farm as well as safety measures that make farming safer.



Laurens County NRCS Flood Prevention Project Still Making a Difference

Amy O. Maxwell, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist

Although completed over fifteen years ago, an NRCS flood prevention project is still having lasting effects in Laurens County. The Little River Flood Control Project was completed in 1989, and today, the same area that was impacted by damaging flood waters is thriving.

The area was improved with NRCS financial and technical assistance totaling over \$3 million. The project involved the installation of a small channel, as well as a series of dams. "The flood control structures help to slow down the flood waters before they reach the channel," explained NRCS District Conservationist Lisa Good. She went on to explain that the channel area has to be cleaned out on a regular basis, and NRCS inspects it annually to ensure that it is working properly.

The area along the channel was transformed into a beautiful greenway area, complete with adequate lighting, benches, and a walking path which winds from Main Street along the Little River and Reedy Fork Creek. Little River Park was created to provide area residents with a great place to relax and enjoy nature. A natural buffer of trees and grass provides a transition zone between residential and commercial areas.

"The City of Laurens has really put forth a lot of resources, time, and money, to put the finishing touches on this project that NRCS started many years ago," said Good.



Laurens County's Little River Park was created alongside a channel that NRCS installed to control flood waters. The greenway area provides a great space for residents to enjoy nature.



NRCS engineers designed a channel to prevent further flooding in Laurens County.

NRCS Helps Kick Off SC Arbor Day Week at State House

The Midlands Arbor Day Committee joined forces with the Governor's Office to proclaim the week of November 26- December 2, 2006, as Arbor Day Week. During a kick off celebration on November 27th, the committee hosted *Arbor Day State House Tree Planting and Proclamation*.

The ceremony involved NRCS, the Richland County Conservation Commission, Richland County SWCD, South Carolina Forestry Commission, City of Columbia, and a host of others.

The ceremony included the reading of a Governor's Proclamation, as well as the planting of a Willow Oak on the west side of the State House grounds.

Arbor Day is celebrated on December 1st in South Carolina.

Love Your Trees South Carolina... because they:

- Help to protect us from Ultra-Violet Light
- Absorb pollution
- Enhance air quality
- Stabilize ground soil
- Buffer Noise
- Are a fuel source
- Provide food and shelter
- Provide medicines and dyes
- Enhance property value
- Increase energy efficiency



left to right: Ben Coonrod, Richland County Appearance Commission, Carol Kososki, Richland County Conservation Commission and Bob Schowalter, South Carolina Forestry Commission, dedicate a live Willow Oak on the West Side of the State House grounds.

Barns, Barbecue, and Bales of Cotton Ag. Commemorative Book Needs Your Photos

The Clemson University College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Life Sciences Agriculture Alumni and the SC Farm Bureau Foundation are joining forces to publish a limited-edition book entitled, *Barns, Barbecue & Bales of Cotton*. The pictorial publication will be a rural retrospective of South Carolina agriculture featuring the people, places, and flavors that create lasting memories and foster values.

You are invited to submit your old and new photographs for a chance to have them included in the upcoming book. The book will feature images and captions related to beautiful agricultural buildings and barns, our warm and welcoming hospitality featured at rural community gatherings featuring great southern foods and the history of agricultural production and sales of all SC agricultural commodities. We are also looking to capture the agricultural heritage of important ag related organizations such as Agricultural Extension Services, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Agricultural Education and SC Farm Bureau just to name a few. This 8 1/2" x 11" book, scheduled for fall release in 2007, will feature 260 pages filled with hundreds of photographs.

Proceeds from book sales will support youth agricultural education and ag college scholarships. This is a very unique project that preserves South Carolina's agricultural past while funding the future dreams of our young agricultural students.

The photo entry form and specifications are explained at <http://www.clemson.edu/CAFLS/>. Submission deadline is January 1, 2007. For additional information contact Kirby Player, 1-800-823-0508, or kplayer@clemson.edu.



State Office Earth Team Volunteer Lends a Hand to Finance Division

by Sabrenna Bryant, Public Affairs Specialist

What happens when an Earth Team volunteer really loves working with NRCS? For some volunteers, it means employment with NRCS! Earth Team volunteers are an integral part of NRCS and they help the agency accomplish conservation goals. The Earth Team is also a great way to identify future NRCS employees. Such was the case for Steven Maness, the new Financial Assistant in the State Office.

Maness, who lives in Lancaster, SC, heard about the Earth Team through the SC Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD), where he was enrolled in a program that provides job training for disabled people.

It just so happened that NRCS Human Resources Manager Dory Reeves was recruiting Earth Team Volunteers through the SCVRD, and a match was made. Because of his previous experience in business and accounting, Maness accepted the NRCS volunteer position with the NRCS Finance Division. He volunteered for three weeks, contributing a total of 120 hours. Because of his considerable effort, skill and efficiency he then earned a permanent position as a Financial Assistant.

"Steven has proven to be very professional, a great organizer and has shown proficient knowledge of spreadsheet programs," stated Adline Crum, NRCS Budget Officer. "He has been a tremendous help and asset to the financial department."

As for Maness, he couldn't be happier with the way things turned out. "It was my hope that by serving as a volunteer I would become a full-time employee. The Earth Team was a great outlet for me to gain insight about NRCS, and after getting to know more about the agency and the people who work here, I knew it was where I wanted to be employed."



Steven Maness is a new state office Financial Assistant who began his NRCS career as an Earth Team volunteer.

SC Earth Team Has a Great 2006

The SC Earth Team had a very successful FY-2006. There were more than 1,000 volunteers, with nearly 10,000 volunteer hours. The SC Conservation Partnership appreciates the efforts of everyone around the state who helped make the SC Earth Team so successful. *Here are some of the highlights of the past year--*

Field Offices with the Most Volunteer Hours

- Pickens SWCD—1696 hrs
- Orangeburg—1447 hrs
- Cherokee SWCD—866 hrs

Individuals with the Most Volunteer Hours

- Harold McJunkin, Pickens SWCD—419 hrs
- R.G. Gallman, Union SWCD—216 hrs
- Darrell Harrison, Foothills RC&D—178 hrs

Groups with the Most Volunteer Hours

- Pickens Conservation Team—1234 hrs
- Associate Degree Nursing Program (Orangeburg)—743 hrs
- Farm Safety Day Group (Orangeburg)—450 hrs

State Leadership Team Visits York County

The SC NRCS State Leadership Team (SLT) recently visited York County for a 2-day meeting. On the final day of the meeting, the staff enjoyed a conservation tour, led by York NRCS conservationists Cliff Eaddy, Jessie Thomson, and Lance Brewington. The group visited Anne Springs Close Greenway in Fort Mill, and also

visited a Catawba Indian Nation conservation site.



State Conservationist Walt Douglas leads the way across a foot bridge at the Close Greenway in Fort Mill.

Meet Our New Employees

Kim Jan

Administrative Assistant for Programs and Public Affairs, State Office



Kim was born and raised in Toledo, Ohio. Upon completion of high school, she joined the Army, completing basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. She then moved overseas to Frankfurt, Germany, for over four and a half years where she was assigned to the 378th Personnel Service Company and Headquarters V Corps. Kim spent almost five and a half years in the Army as an Administrative Specialist, Sergeant, E-5.

Since then, she has worked as a civilian for the Department of the Army and Department of Homeland Security, U. S. Coast Guard and has worked for the federal government for almost 20 years.

She has three wonderful children, David, 22, Alex, 18 and Melissa, 16 ½ years old. She enjoys the outdoors, traveling, camping, canoeing, rafting, horseback riding, fishing and bicycling. Welcome to NRCS Kim!

Kim Williams-McDowell

Human Resources Assistant, State Office

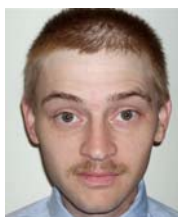
Kim transferred from Fort Jackson, SC. Her work history includes employment in Wiesbaden, Germany, where she worked in the fields of forensics and toxicology for five years. A native of New Orleans, Kim also enjoys golfing and traveling.



Steven Maness

Financial Assistant, State Office

Steven is a 34-year old single father living in Lancaster County. In addition to raising his 3-year old son, he enjoys the outdoors, fishing, hunting, and camping when he can find the time. He also owns three horses that he rides quite often. He joins the NRCS team through the help of the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Steven has a disabling condition known as ankylosing spondylitis, which is a rheumatic disease, or an arthritic condition of the spine. This is the same disorder that former SC Governor Dick Riley has. Steven began work with NRCS as an Earth Team Volunteer (see article on page 6), and is now a full time employee. Welcome to NRCS Steven!



Justin Rivers, Soil Conservation Technician, Chester

Justin was born and raised in Chesterfield County, and enjoys hunting and fishing. Previously, he was a SWCD Soil Technician. Welcome to NRCS Justin!



Corey Smith, Soil Conservation Technician, St. Matthews

Corey was born in Gilbert, SC, but raised in a variety of locations since his father was in the Air Force. He earned his Bachelor's Degree from Oklahoma University in Geography and is completing studies at Clemson University for his Masters in Forest Resources. Welcome to NRCS Corey!



Sue Griggs, Soil Conservation Technician, Chesterfield

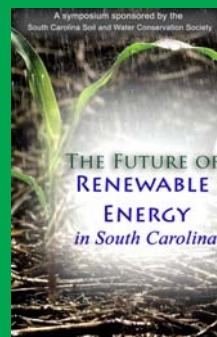
Sue was born and raised in Chadsford, PA. She has a Bachelor's Degree from Widener University, and has lived in South Carolina since 1998. Welcome to NRCS Sue!



January '07 Conferences

SC Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) Symposium and

2007 SC Conservation Partnership Conference



SWCS Symposium
January 3, 2007

**Find all the info.
you need to
register at**

<http://www.dnr.sc.gov/conservation/conference/>

Conservation
Partnership
Conference
January 4-6, 2007



**Becoming
Watershed
Wise**



Conservation Photo Contest Winners



1st Place:

The Spider and the Bee

Meg McElveen, SCDNR Wildlife Biologist, Marion



2nd Place:

Ann Bentley, Soil Con. Technician, Charleston



3rd Place:

Justin Rivers, Soil Con. Technician, Chester

Photo Contest Honorable Mentions



Emory Holsonback,
Soil Scientist, Greenwood



Cliff Eaddy,
District Conservationist,
York



Alex Johnson,
Sundown in Wardak, Afghanistan

PERSONNEL NEWS

NEW EMPLOYEES

Corey Smith was selected as a Soil Conservation Technician, GS-0458-06, St. Matthews Field Office, effective November 26, 2006.

Justin Michael Rivers was selected as a Soil Conservation Technician, GS-0458-05, Chester Field Office, effective November 26, 2006.

Susan Griggs was selected as a Soil Conservationist Technician, GS-0458-07, Chesterfield Field Office, effective November 26, 2006.

Steven Maness was selected as Financial Assistant, GS- 0303-04, on a term appointment in the State Office, effective November 12, 2006.

PROMOTIONS

Bobby McQueen was promoted and converted to a permanent career position as Civil Engineer Technician, GS-0802-07, State Engineering Staff, State Office, effective October 29, 2006.

CONVERSION TO PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT

Richard Williamson in the Kingstree Field Office, was converted from a Career Intern Appointment to a Career Conditional Appointment, GS-0458-06, effective November 12, 2006.

TRANSFER

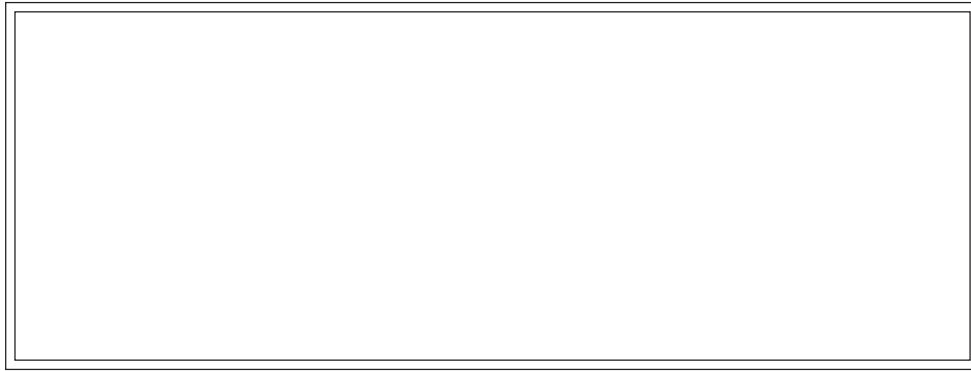
Kimberly Jan was selected as Administrative Assistant, GS-0326-06, on the ASTC Programs Staff, State Office, effective October 16, 2006. She transferred from the Coast Guard in Ohio.

Phillip Rippe was promoted and reassigned as the State Conservation Engineer, GS-0810-13, State Office, effective November 12, 2006. He transferred from NRCS in Richmond, Virginia.

RESIGNATION

Christopher Graves, District Conservationist in the Jasper /Beaufort Field Office, resigned effective September 30, 2006.

Helping People Help the Land



FIRST CLASS

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